



# CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM PLANT GUIDE

## **CRESTED WHEATGRASS**

**Cultivars:** Nordan, Hycrest, Kirk,  
Ephraim, Parkway, Douglas,  
Ruff, Summit

**Seed Size:** 175-200,000 seeds/pound

**Form:** Bunchgrass, 14-24" tall,  
Short-spike seedhead

**Area of Adaptation:** Crested wheatgrass is adapted to much of the Inland Pacific Northwest that receive between 9 and 20 inches of annual precipitation. 'Nordan' is a very old cultivar and probably the most drought tolerant of the crested wheatgrass varieties. 'Nordan' performs very well in areas that receive 9" or more precipitation. 'Douglas' is a recent release and is the least drought tolerant of the crested wheatgrasses (> 14" ppt). 'Douglas' is a very wide-leaved, forage cultivar. 'Hycrest' is a hybrid crested wheatgrass and is quite drought tolerant. 'Ephraim' will spread via rhizomes on sites that receive 14-inches or more annual precipitation. 'Parkway' is an old fairway type and is noticeably shorter than most crested wheatgrass. 'Parkway' is quite drought tolerant. 'Ruff', 'Kirk', and 'Summit' have performed quite well in earlier CRP plantings.

**Seeding:** Crested wheatgrass is fairly small seeded and must be seeded no deeper than 1/2-inch. A firm seedbed that allows for good seed to soil contact aids emergence. Seeding should be completed late in the fall or very early in the spring. It germinates readily at very cool temperatures and grows fairly rapidly after emergence. It is one of the easiest grasses to establish in the dryland regions of the Pacific Northwest.

Crested wheatgrass seed flows through drills fairly well but can bridge. Periodic checking the seed box and manually stirring the seed with a hoe or similar tool will prevent bridging and compaction in the seed box.

Broadcast seeding should only be considered for fields that are too loose to pack. Light harrowing can improve stand establishment. Harrowing immediately prior to broadcasting is generally superior to harrowing after broadcasting. Harrowing after seeding can result in deep seed burial.

**Management & Uses:** Crested wheatgrass is an important introduced cool season grass. It develops a tremendous root system and is very competitive with weeds. Crested wheatgrass is a preferred early season forage for most classes of livestock and wild ungulates. It is commonly used as spring pasture prior to turning livestock onto native range. Native plants such as rubber rabbitbrush, big sage, western yarrow, and big bluegrass readily invade undisturbed plantings in the Pacific Northwest. It is a fair to good reseeder.

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